

VZCZCXRO4653
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHFL RUEHIHL RUEHKUK RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV
DE RUEHAK #3006/01 3521555
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 181555Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4726
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU PRIORITY
RHMFISS/425ABG IZMIR TU//CC// PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA/DSCA// PRIORITY
RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU PRIORITY
RUEUITH/TLO ANKARA TU PRIORITY
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEPGAB/MNF-I C2X BAGHDAD IZ PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 003006

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/SE AND NEA/I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: REACTION TO MILITARY STRIKES AGAINST
PKK...DAY TWO

REF: A. ANKARA 2997

- [1](#)B. ANKARA 2991
- [1](#)C. ANKARA 2990
- [1](#)D. ANKARA 2983
- [1](#)E. ANKARA 2974

Classified By: PolCouns Janice G. Weiner for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: Senior GOT and military officials continue to praise the strikes against PKK targets in northern Iraq and deny that civilian targets there were hit. However, inadequacies in interagency coordination and the sidelining of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs plague GOT efforts to address the PKK problem and protect gains it has made in establishing a cooperative relationship with the Government of Iraq. Opposition to the attacks is starting to be heard, especially in Turkey's southeast. If the GOT is indeed pursuing a carrot and stick approach to solving the PKK problem, an increasingly large number of media commentators are beginning to urge PM Erdogan to move ahead quickly with the carrot. END SUMMARY

Praise for Military; Lack of Coordination Evident

[1](#)2. (SBU) GOT officials continue to praise the Turkish military for its ability to strike PKK targets inside northern Iraq, while Turkish General Staff (TGS) officers deny reports from Iraq that civilians targets were hit. Prime Minister Erdogan said the Turkish armed forces are doing what is necessary to fight terrorism and would continue to do so. The PKK is our enemy. It is threatening our national unity and we are using our rights stemming from international law against it. We will continue to take and use all political, diplomatic, military, social, and economic measures on this issue. President Gul said that Turkey is conducting operations in a "determined way," with broad agreement throughout the government on the need to pursue the steps Turkey has carried out in recent days. Gul added that it is out of the question that Turkey would carry out an

operation against civilians in Iraq. Iraq is a neighbor and through these operations the GOT wants to save Iraq as well from the terrorist menace posed by the PKK. Turkish Air Force Commander Gen. Aydogan Babaoglu claimed that Turkish jets had been "sensitive" in their operations over northern Iraq, saying the targets were established only after ensuring they were not in civilian residential areas. He emphasized that none of the bombs dropped on targets in Iraq had missed nor had civilians been harmed.

¶3. (S) GOT Deputy Coordinator for Iraq Murat Ozcelik (please protect) told us on December 18 that MFA, at least at a senior working level, was not notified in advance of the December 16 attacks against PKK targets in northern Iraq. As a result, MFA did not reach out to Iraqi counterparts to coordinate. Ozcelik speculated that, considering the lack of response to the strikes from PM Maliki's office, it may be that PM Erdogan spoke with Maliki before or just after the attack. We pointed to the groundwork laid in recent months to improve Turkey's relationship with Iraq and PM Maliki's government and expressed concern that those gains could be reversed absent continued efforts to engage GOI officials regarding attacks against PKK targets on Iraqi territory. Ozcelik agreed fully.

¶4. (S) Ozcelik admitted ruefully that senior MFA leadership has, for now, sidelined the Department with regard to GOT Iraq policy. He noted that TGS had stopped sending representatives to the regular meetings of the GOT's inter-agency Iraq coordination group about six weeks ago and suspects it was because they did not want to share their plans with other departments. While Ozcelik strongly believes now is the time for contacts, be they front or back

ANKARA 00003006 002 OF 003

channel, between MFA and Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) officials, he believes MFA Under Secretary Apakan has blocked such efforts and GOT Iraq Coordinator Oguz Celikkol has not pressed hard enough to overcome Apakan's objections. He is hoping direct orders from the Presidency or Prime Ministry might allow him greater latitude to undertake such an initiative.

Some Voice Concern About Wielding the Stick

¶5. (C) While overall reaction to the airstrikes of Turkish officials, politicians, analysts, and media pundits has been positive, many in southeastern Turkey have expressed concern. Former Justice and Development Party (AKP) MP from Hakkari Province Fehmi Oztunc told us he did not support the attacks. He expressed concern for civilian casualties in northern Iraq and called the attacks unnecessary and senseless. Former Republican People's Party (CHP) MP Mesut Deger told us residents in the overwhelmingly Kurdish city of Diyarbakir were sad the GOT had resorted to violence when PM Erdogan had just been talking about finding a peaceful solution and bringing PKKers down from the mountains one week earlier.

¶6. (C) Zekeriya Aydin, former president of the Batman Bar Association, told us on December 18 that the vast majority of Turkish citizens in the southeast oppose the military operation in northern Iraq, although he personally was not surprised it occurred. He called for a "people solution" not a "violence solution." He saw the GOT as following a two-pronged approach of appealing to PKKers to come down from the mountains and return home while at the same time flexing its muscles and showing that there will be a price to pay if they do not. Pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) MP Fatma Kurtulan said the DTP does not see any utility to a military operation in solving the PKK problem. "Conflicts take deeper roots through violence," she emphasized. In a public statement, the Turkish Peace Assembly characterized the operation in Iraq as a heavy blow to long-term regional relations and expressed the fear that its continuation will end all hope of finding a peaceful and democratic solution to

Turkey's Kurdish issue.

¶17. (C) Adnan Elci, president of the Chamber of Commerce in Cizre, which lies close to Turkey's border with Iraq, told us he sees no problem with airstrikes against the PKK, provided civilians are not targeted. While supporting a revamped "return to home" law, Elci said such a law in and of itself will be insufficient to attract a large number of PKKers to abandon their fight and their hideouts in the mountains. Potential returnees will require jobs and psychological counseling to enable them to resume their normal lives in Turkey.

While Many in the Media Press for Progress on the Carrot

¶18. (SBU) A large number of columnists used their December 18 editorials to urge PM Erdogan and the GOT to move quickly to extend a hand to PKKers who may wish to return home. Ertugrul Ozkok of "Hurriyet" called for all Turks and especially opposition political parties and the media to support government efforts to end the PKK problem through such an approach. Derya Sazak in "Milliyet" wrote that now is the time to produce solutions that can persuade PKKers to lay down arms altogether and urged the GOT and opposition parties to work cooperatively toward that end. Nazli Ilicak of "Sabah" stressed that Turkey should allow PKKers, aside from a handful of top administrators, to return home without having to fulfill the requirements of the current repentance law. She noted that such an approach may be difficult to accept for the families of soldiers who have lost their lives in the struggle against PKK terrorism, but should be

ANKARA 00003006 003 OF 003

implemented to avoid sacrificing additional martyrs. Ismet Berkan of "Radikal" wants GOT officials to implement as soon as possible economic and social measures that can prevent new recruits from joining the PKK. He also called on parliamentarians to expand freedoms in Turkey, complementing the military approach with a series of measures designed to ease the sense of crisis felt by many Kurds inside Turkey. Ihsan Dagi of "Zaman" called on the government to work quickly on a "return to home" project, to include a regional development initiative for SE Turkey, and a bill to reform local government as a way of pulling the rug out from under the PKK and its support.

Media Miss 12/17 Strikes in Zap

¶19. (S) Turkish media reported widely on the initial airstrikes against PKK targets in the Kandil mountains and along the border, which took place early December 16 (ref e), as well as on Turkish troops' pursuit of PKKers inside northern Iraq late in the evening of December 17 and early December 18 (ref a). However, TGS released no public announcement of air and artillery strikes that it carried out against PKK targets mid-day December 17 (ref b). Media outlets still have not reported those strikes.

¶10. (C) COMMENT: The degree to which media commentators and others have begun to push publicly for the GOT to initiate an effort to attract the bulk of the PKK's fighting force to peacefully lay down arms and return home is encouraging. The opposition-led attacks over the course of the past year, accusing the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) of being feckless in the face of the terrorist threat posed by the PKK, had found fertile ground in the writings of many commentators. Their about-face is a welcome sign.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON